Boston University

Graduate School

Thesis

The Influence of Nature on the Book of Psalms

Submitted by

Ruth Elizabeth Sowle

(A. B., Keuka College, 1928)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

1929.

Contents

Introduction

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of this paper is to discover and set forth the extent to which the writers of the Psalms were affected by the facts and appearances of Nature about them, and to discover, as far as possible, the nature of that influence.

Definition of Terms. By "Nature" we shall mean all that is usually included under the expression, "out-of-doors," everything other than spirits and the productions of spiritual beings. By "influence" we mean the resultant ideas, moods, attitudes, etc. which contact with Nature occasioned.

Method of Procedure. The method of procedure shall be that of classification and analysis. We shall collect from the Psalms all passages that in any way allude to Nature, classify them, and then examine them as to the manner of their use and meaning.

Chapter I.

The History and Nature of the Psalter.

Division of the Psalter.

The Psalter, as we now have it, is a collection of one hundred and fifty Psalms, divided into five books of forty-one, thirty-one, seventeen, seventeen, and forty-four Psalms respectively.[1] This, however, is not the whole story. When we examine further we find that there are groupings within that seem to indicate definite earlier organizations of Psalms for specific purposes. According to Bewer we have the following groupings:[2]

1. The first David Psalter in Psalms 2-41.
2. The second David Psalter in Psalms 51-72.
3. The Korah Psalter in Psalms 42-49.
4. The Asaph Psalter in Psalms 50; 73-83.
5. An appendix to the Korah Psalter in Psalms 84-89.
6. The Hallelujah Psalter in Psalms 105-107; 111-118; and 146-150.
7. The Pilgrim Psalter in Psalms 120-134.
8. Another David Psalter in Psalms 138-145.
9. The hymns in Psalms 93; 95-100 appear to have formed a special collection, also.

History of the Psalter.

When we raise the question as to how the book of Psalms came to be what it now is, we have an intricate and interesting history.

1. Eiselen, F. C., The Psalms and Other Sacred Writings, p.41.
2. Bewer, J. A., The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development, p.343.

The Psalter has been called the hymn book of the second temple. Eiselen quotes W. T. Davison as saying, "A true hymn book is not made, it grows."[1] Similarly, the Psalter has reached its present form as the result of natural growth or development. The following account of the process resulting in the present book of Psalms is given by W. R. Smith:[2]

I. The formation of the first Davidic collection, with a closing doxology, Psalms 1-41:55 -- about the time of Ezra-Nehemiah.

II. The formation of a second Davidic collection, with a doxology and subscription, Psalms 51-72 -- during the fourth century B. C.

III. The formation of a twofold Levitical collection, a Korahite collection, Psalms 42-49, an Asaphic collection, Psalms 50, 73-83 -- between B. C. 430 and 330.

IV. An Elohistic redaction and combination of II and III -- during the third century B. C.

V. The addition to IV of a non-Elohistic supplement and doxology, Psalms 84-89.

VI. The formation of another collection, which was later added to I - V, Psalms 90-150.

"According to this scheme, the completed Psalter," says Eiselen, "would have consisted in the beginning

1. Eiselen, F. C., The Psalms and Other Sacred Writings, p.64.
2. Ibid., p. 65.

of three originally independent collections, the first, Psalms I-41; the second, Psalms 42-89; the third, Psalms 90-150. This threefold division would be earlier than the later fivefold division, which has come down to the present."[1] It is probable that the first step in the compilation of the Psalter was the bringing together of individual Psalms to form small collections. These small collections were then combined into three larger collections, which, in turn, were united into one book. Then later this book was divided into five books, in which form the Psalter has come down to the present.[2]

Authorship.

Jewish tradition has linked the beginnings of Psalmody with the name of David. But it is now generally acknowledged that the titles relating to the authorship of the Psalms cannot be regarded as prefixed by the authors themselves, or as representing trustworthy traditions. The heading, "of David", is, in itself, no definite criterion of authorship, but, like the corresponding titles, "of Asaph" and "of the sons of Korah", a mere index of the primary collection from which the Psalm was taken. It is difficult, however, to believe that the tradition of the Jewish Church was entirely wrong in assigning the foundation of the Psalter to David. That he was a gifted poet is proved by his

1.Eiselen, F. C., The Psalms and Other Sacred Writings, p.65.
2.Ibid., p. 69.

noble elegy over Saul and Jonathan (11 Sam. 1:19), and his lament for Abner (11 Sam. 3:33). It is hardly conceivable that David would be regarded as "the sweet Psalmist of Israel" if some Psalms, at least, were not actually written by him.[1] The Psalms, as we have them, are ascribed to the following:[2]

I.Moses (Psalm 90).....Total, 1.

2.David (Book I, 37:3-9, 11-32, 34-41;
Book II, 18:51-65; 68-70;
Book III, 1:86;
Book IV, 2:101, 103;
Book V, 15:108-110, 122, 124,
131, 133, 138-145)....Total, 73.

3.Solomon (72, 127).....Total, 2.

4.Asaph (50, 73-83).....Total, 12.

5.Sons of Korah (42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87,
88).....Total, 11.

6.Ethan, the Ezrahite (89).....Total, 1.

7.Heman, the Ezrahite (88), ascribed
also to the Sons of Korah.

Total number of Psalms ascribed to some
author in the title..... 100.

Date of the Psalms.

In general, all that can be said regarding the dates of the Psalms is that they were written during the centuries beginning with David and

1.Eiselen, F. C., The Psalms and Other Sacred Writings, p.47.

2.Ibid., pp. 42, 43.

ending with the Maccabean era. According to Kent, the great crises that vitally affected the Psalter are "(1) the destruction of Jerusalem in 586, (2) the seventy years of discouragement and petty persecutions which followed the disillusionment of those who rebuilt the second temple, and (3) the bitter Maccabean struggle. The brighter, more joyous periods were (1) the few short years between B. C. 520 and 516, when the temple was being rebuilt, (2) the period of hopefulness and rejoicing following the work of Nehemiah in 445, (3) the comparatively calm though less joyous Greek period, and (4) the confident, exultant, warlike age inaugurated by the brilliant victories of Judas Maccabeus."[1]

We have, then, for our study a collection of one hundred and fifty poems growing out of the historico-religious life of Israel over a period of approximately one thousand years, written by various writers at various times, and used for different religious purposes.

We shall turn now to an examination of this body of literature from the point of view of our present study.

1.Kent, C. F., The Songs, Hymns, and Prayers of the Old Testament, p. 44.

Chapter II.

Analysis of Nature References in the Psalms.

General Extent. The extent to which this selected body of liturgic and hymnic literature is colored by references to the out-of-doors is both interesting and significant. We find that, of the one hundred and fifty Psalms, one hundred and four have allusions to Nature, leaving only forty-six with no Nature references, whatever. Three Psalms (8, 29, and 104) are entirely Nature Psalms, thirteen (Psalms 19, 23, 24, 36, 65, 68, 77, 78, 107, 121, 139, 147, and 148) are predominantly affected by Nature, while the rest carry Nature allusions in varying forms, and in smaller quantities.

Classification of Objects of Nature

	Total Number
Desert	
Psalms 78:40; and 106:14.....	2
Honey	
Psalms 19:10; and 119:103.....	2
Chaff, Stubble	
Psalms 1:4; 35:5; and 83:13.....	3
Fish	
Psalms 8:8; 105:29; and 148:7.....	3

	Total Number
Snow	
Psalms 51:7; 68:14; 147:16; and 148:8....	4
Pastures	
Psalms 23:2; 65:12, 13; 74:1; and 95:7...	5
Shepherd	
Psalms 23:1; 28:9; 49:14; 78:71,72; 80:1.	6
Clouds	
Psalms 18:11,12; 77:17; 78:14; 97:2; 99:7; 104:3; 105:39; and 147:8....	9
Wind	
Psalms 11:6; 18:42; 48:7; 55:8; 58:9; 78:26, 39; 103:16; 104:3, 4; 107:25; 135:7; 147:18; and 148:8.....	14
Wilderness	
Psalms 29:8; 65:12; 68:7; 72:9; 78:15, 19, 40; 95:8; 102:6; 106:9, 14, 26; 107:4, 33, 35; 136:16.....	16
Trees	
Fig	
Psalm 105:33.....1.....	
Fir	
Psalm 104:17.....1	
Olive	
Psalm 52:8.....1	
Palm	
Psalm 92:12.....1	

Total Number

Sycomore

Psalm 78:47.....1

Willow

Psalm 137:2.....1

Woods

Psalm 132:6.....1

Forest

Psalms 29:9; 50:10; 83:14.3

Trees in General

Psalms 1:3; 37:35; 74:5;
96:12.....4

Cedar

Psalms 29:5; 80:10; 92:12;
104:16; 148:9.....5..... 19

Birds

Eagle

Psalm 103:5.....1

Owl

Psalm 102:6.....1

Pelican

Psalm 1o2:6.....1

Quails

Psalm 105:40.....1

Ravens

Psalm 147:9.....1

Stork

Psalm 104:17.....1

Total Number

Swallow:-

Psalm 84:3.....1

Sparrow:-

Psalms 84:3; 102:7..2

Dove:-

Psalms 55:6; 68:13;

74:19.....3

Birds in General:-

Psalms 8:8; 11:1;

50:11; 78:27;

79:2; 104:12,

17; 124:7;

148:10.....9.....21

Rain, Storms, etc.:-

Dew

Psalm 133:3.....1

Frost

Psalm 78:47.....1

Showers

Psalm 65:10.....1

Storm

Psalms 83:15; 107:29.2

Thunder

Psalms 77:18; 78:48;

104:7.....3

Hailstones

Psalms 18:12, 13;

Total Number

78:47, 48; 105:32.....5

Lightning:-

Psalms 18:14; 77:18;

97:4; 135:7; 144:6.5

Rain:-

Psalms 68:8, 9; 84:6;

135:7; 147:8.....5.....23

Grass, Herbs, etc.:-

Flowers:-

Psalm 103:15.....1

Hyssop:-

Psalm 51:7.....1

Olive Plant:-

Psalm 128:3.....1

Plants in General:-

Psalm 144:12.....1

Sheaves:-

Psalm 129:7.....1

Herbs:-

Psalms 37:2; 104:14;

105:35.....3

Thorns:-

Psalms 58:9; 118:12.....2

Vine:-

Psalms 78:47; 80:14;

105:33; 128:3.....4

Total Number

Grass:-

Psalms 37:2; 72:16; 90:5;
92:7; 102:4, 11;
103:15; 104:14; 106:20;
129:6; 147:8.....11.....25

Rocks:-

Psalms 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14;27:5; 28:1;
31:2, 3; 40:2; 42:9; 61:2;
62:2, 6, 7; 71:3; 78:15, 16,
20, 35; 81:16; 89:26; 92:15;
94:22; 95:1; 104:18; 105:41;
114:8; 137:9; 141:6; 144:1.....30

Heavenly Bodies:-

*Firmament:-

Psalm 19:1.....1

Stars:-

Psalms 8:3; 136:9; 147:4;
148:3.....4

Moon:-

Psalms 8:3; 72:5; 7; 81:3;89:37;
104:19; 121:6; 136:9;
148:3.....9

*Sky:-

Psalms 18:11; 36:5; 57:10;
68:34; 77:17; 78:23;
89:6, 37; 108:4.....9

*These terms are used practically synonomously.

Total Number

*Heavens:-

Psalms 19:1; 50:4, 6;
57:11; 102:25;
103:11; 104:2;
108:4; 115:15, 16;
136:5.....11

Sun:-

Psalms 19:14; 50:1; 58:8;
72:5,17; 74:16;
104:19, 22; 113:3;
121:6; 136:8; 148:3...12.....46

Hills and Mountains:-

Bashan:-

Psalm 68:15.....1

*Hill of Jehovah:-

Psalm 24:3.....1

Mizar:-

Psalm 42:6.....1

Mountains Around Jerusalem:-

Psalm 125:2.....1

*Mountains of God:-

Psalm 36:6.....1

Mountains of Prey:-

Psalm 76:4.....1

My Mountain:-

Psalm 30:7.....1

*These terms are used practically synonomously.

Total Number

Hermon:-

Psalms 42:6; 133:3.....2

*Holy Mountain:-

Psalms 48:1; 87:1.....2

*Holy Hill:-

Psalms 3:4; 15:1; 43:3.....3

Lebanon:-

Psalms 29:6; 72:16; 92:12.....3

Hills in General:-

Psalms 50:10; 98:8; 114:6;

148:9.....4

*Mount Zion:-

Psalms 2:6; 48:2; 11, 12;

74:2; 78:68; 99:2;

125:1; 133:3.....9

Mountains in General:-

Psalms 18:7; 46:2, 3; 65:6;

68:16; 72:3; 78:54;

80:10; 90:2; 95:4;

97:5; 104:6, 8, 10,

13, 18, 32; 114:4, 6;

121:1; 144:5; 147:8;

148:9.....23.....53

Beasts, Insects, Reptiles, etc.:-

Ewes:-

Psalm 78:71.....1

*These terms are used practically synonomously.

Total Number

Foxes:-

Psalm 63:10.....1

Frogs:-

Psalm 78:45.....1

Jackals:-

Psalm 44:19.....1

Snail:-

Psalm 58:8.....1

Hind:-

Psalms 18:33; 29:9.....2

Adder:-

Psalms 58:4; 91:13; 140:3.....3

Bulls:-

Psalms 22:12; 50:13; 68:30....3

Calf:-

Psalms 29:6; 68:30; 106:19....3

Lambs:-

Psalms 37:20; 114:4, 6.....3

Rams:-

Psalms 66:15; 114:4, 6.....3

Serpent:-

Psalms 58:4; 91:13; 140:3.....3

Bullock:-

Psalms 50:9; 51:19; 66:15;

69:31.....4

Total Number

Cattle:-

Psalms 50:10; 78:48; 104:14;

148:10.....4

Goats:-

Psalms 50:9, 13; 66:15;

104:18.....4

Dog:-

Psalms 22:16, 20; 59:6, 14;

68:23.....5

Horse:-

Psalms 20:7; 32:9; 33:17;

76:6; 147:10.....5

Flocks:-

Psalms 49:14; 65:13; 77:20;

78:52; 80:1; 107:41....6

Ox:-

Psalms 8:7; 29:6; 69:31; 92:10;

106:20; 144:14.....6

Insects:-

Bees:-

Psalm 118:12.....1

Caterpillar:-

Psalm 78:46.....1

Flies:-

Psalm 78:45.....1

Total Number

Moth:-

Psalm 39:11.....1

Worm:-

Psalm 22:6.....1

Locust:-

Psalms 78:46; 1o5:34;

109:23.....3....8

Sheep:-

Psalms 8:7; 44:11, 22; 74:1;

78:52; 79:13; 95:7;

100:3; 119:176.....9

Lion:-

Psalms 7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 22:13,

21; 34:10; 35:17; 57;4;

58:6; 91:13; 104:21.....11

Beasts in General:-

Psalms 8:7; 36:6; 49:12, 20;

50:10, 11; 73:22; 74:19;

79:2; 80:13; 104:20, 25;

135:8; 148:10.....14.....101

Sea and Water:-

Fountain:-

Psalms 74:15..... 1

Lack of Water:-

Psalm 63:1.....1

Pool of Water:-

Psalm 107:35.....1

Total Number

Waterfall:-

Psalm 42:7.....1

Water Brooks:-

Psalms 42:1; 110:7.....2

Waters of Meribah:-

Psalms 81:7; 106:32.....2

Waves:-

Psalms 88:7; 93:4.. 2

Springs:-

Psalms 84:6; 104:10; 107:33,35..4

Streams:-

Psalms 46:4; 78:16, 20, 44;

124:4.....5

Flood:-

Psalms 24:2; 29:10; 69:2,15;

74:15; 90:5; 93:3; 98:8..8

Rivers:-

River of Babylon:-

Psalm 137:1.....1

River of Kishon:-

Psalm 83:9.....1

Jordan:-

Psalms 114:3, 5....2

Rivers in General:-

Psalms 46:4; 65:9;

66:6; 72:8;

Total Number

74:15; 78:44; 80:11;

89:25; 107:33.....9....13

Seas:-

Red Sea:-

Psalms 106:7, 9, 22;

136:13, 15.....5

Seas in General:-

Psalms 24:2; 33:7; 46:2;

65:5, 7; 66:6;

68:22; 69:34; 72:8;

74:13; 77:19;

78:13,27,53; 80:11;

89:9,25; 95:5;

96:11; 98:7;

104:25; 107:23;

114:3, 5; 135:6;

139:9; 146:6.....27...32

Water:-

Psalms 18:11;15,16; 22:14; 29:3;

32:6; 46:3; 58:7; 66:12;

69:1,2,14; 73:10; 77:16;19;

88:17; 93:4; 104:3,6; 105:29;

106:11; 107:23; 124:4;5;

136:6; 144:7; 147:18;

148:4.....28.....100

Classification According to Literary Usage.

Total Number

Apostrophe:-

Psalms 28:1; 80:1; 114:5,6,7; 148:3,4, 7,8,9,10..... ...11

Metaphor:-

Psalms 18:2,31,46; 19:14; 22:6; 23:1; 28:1,9; 31:2,3; 42:9; 49:14; 62:2,6; 71:3; 74:1,14; 78:35,39,72; 79:13; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1,7; 100:3; 104:3,4; 105:39; 144:1.....31

Simile:-

Psalms 1:3,4; 7:2; 10:9; 11:1; 17:12; 18:33, 42; 19:10; 22:13,14; 29:6; 32:9; 35:5; 36:6; 37:2,20,35; 39:11; 42:1; 44:11, 22; 49:12,14,20; 52:8; 55:6; 58:4,7, 8; 59:6,14; 68:13,14; 69:31; 72:6,16, 17; 73:22; 77:20; 78:52; 79:3; 80:1, 10; 83:13; 88:17; 89:37; 90:5; 92:7,10, 12; 102:4,6,7,11; 103:5,11,15; 107:41; 109:23; 114:4,6; 118:12; 119:103,176; 124:7; 125:1,2; 128:3; 129:6; 133:3; 140:3; 144:12; 147:16;.....74

General Allusions:-

Psalms 2:6; 3:4; 8:3,7,8; 11:6; 15:1; 18:7,

Total Number

11, 12, 13, 14, 15,16,42; 19:1,4; 20:7;
22:12,16,20,21; 23:2; 24:2,3; 27:5; 29:3,
5,8,9,10; 30:7; 32:6; 33:7,17; 34:10; 35:17;
36:5,6; 40:2; 42:6,7; 43:3; 44:19; 46:2,3,4;
48:1,2,7,11,12; 50:1,4,6,9,10,11,13; 51:7,19;
55:8; 57:4,10,11; 58:6,8,9; 61:2; 62:7; 63:1,
10; 65:5,6,7,9,10,12,13; 66:6,12,15; 68:7,8,
9,,4,15,16,22,23,30,34; 69:1,2,14,15,34; 72:3,
5,7,8,9,16; 73:10; 74:1,2,5,13,15,16,19; 76:4,
6; 77:16,17,18,19; 78:13,14,15,16,19,20,23,26,
27,40,44,45,46,47,48,53,54,68,71; 79:2; 80:10,
11,13,14; 81:3,7,16; 83:9,14,15; 84:3,6; 87:1;
88:7; 89:6,9,25; 90:2; 91:13; 93:3,4; 95:4,5,8;
96:11,12; 97:2,4,5; 98:7,8; 99:2,7; 102:6,25;
103:16; 104:2,3,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,16,17,18,
19,20,21,22,25,32; 105:29,32,33,34,35,39,40,41;
106:7,9,11,14,19,20,22,26,32; 107:4,23,25,29,33,
35; 108:4; 110:7; 113:3; 114:3,8; 115:15,16;
121:1,6; 124:4,5; 129:7; 132:6; 135:6,7,8; 136:5,
6,8,9,13,15,16; 137:1,2,9; 139:9; 140:3; 141:6;
144:5,6,7,13,14; 146:6; 147:4,8,9,10,18; 148:10....255

Composite Chart of Classified Material

	Apostrophe	Metaphor	Simile	Allusion	Total
Desert				2	2
Honey			2		2
Chaff			3		3
Fish	1			2	3
Snow	1		2	1	4
Pastures		1		4	5
Shepherd		3	2	1	6
Clouds		1		8	9
Wind	1	2	2	9	14
Wilderness				16	16
Trees	1		6	12	19
Birds		1	7	13	21
Rain etc.			1	22	23
Grass etc.			13	12	25
Rocks	1	16		13	30
Heavenly Bodies	1		3	42	46
Hills and Mountains	2		5	46	53
Beasts and Insects	3	4	30	64	101
Sea and Water	2		6	92	100

Chapter III.

Principles of Selection in Nature Allusions

Hebrew Language. It has been said that true poetry always comes back to the realities of Nature and life. It is suffused with vivid imagination, and rich in figures of speech.[1] The Hebrews were a people of passionate feeling, and their language was peculiarly suited to poetical expression. It is characterized by a simplicity of form, by a lack of precise distinctions of time within the verb forms, by a general lack of abstract terms, and by a rigorous terseness and power. Action is the very essence of Hebrew poetry, and, therefore, the verb is the essential part of the sentence.[2] Moreover, the Hebrew people were originally Nomadic. "The essential looseness of their life, visible in their language, was bound to affect the highest achievements of their literature."[3]

Examining our previous classification in the light of their specific literary expression in the Psalms, we notice that the following factors seem to govern or condition their selection:

1.Objects of Practical Value:-

a.Water.

b.Rain.

1.Gordon, Poets of the Old Testament, p. 3.

2.Ibid., p. 4.

3.Smith, G. A., The Early Poetry of Israel, p. 10.

c.Winds.

d.Sheep and Shepherds.

e.Trees and Forests.

2.Objects of Danger:-

a.Wild Beasts.

b.Serpents.

c.Wilderness.

3.Objects of Strength and Endurance:-

a.Hills and Mountains.

b.Rocks.

4.The Fleeting and Ephemeral:-

a.Grass and Herbs.

b.Snow.

c.Chaff.

5.Aesthetic Appeal:-

a.Birds.

b.Clouds.

c.Flourishing Trees.

6.Impressive - Cosmic:-

a.Heavenly Bodies.

b.Sea.

c.Storm.

d.Sirocco or Desert Wind.

All this is more easily understood when we take account of the nature of Palestine itself.

1.Objects of Practical Value.

a.Water.

The distribution of water in Palestine is very unequal. The land is limestone and very porous, quickly draining away

the heavy rains that fall during a portion of the year. West of the Jordan river the land is particularly barren, containing but very few short perennial streams. There is, however, a characteristic feature of the Syrian summer which provides water in sufficient quantities for vegetation. During the summer months large springs appear at the foot of the hills. These springs, from three to twenty feet wide, and one to three feet deep, are called "fountain heads", Often they supply water sufficient to work mills a few yards away.[1]

As compared with Western Palestine, the Eastern division is a well-watered country. Here four rivers, the Yarmuk, Arab, Jabbok, and Arnon, drain the whole country. The soil is deep volcanic mould on a basalt basis, thus holding its winter moisture for longer than the limestone.[2]

The Jordan river is formed by the union of four small streams which rise in the Lebanons. In its short course the Jordan descends nearly three thousand feet. Thus, its current is very rapid. Probably this fact gave the river its name, since "Jordan" means "Descender".[3]

Palestine owes its very existence as a habitable land to the Mediterranean Sea and to the mountains, for "the sea is the reservoir from which it draws the water vapor of its atmosphere; the mountains condense this

1.Smith, G. A., Historical Geography of the Holy Land,p.77.
2.Ibid., p. 78.
3.Calkin, J. B., Historical Geography of Bible Lands, p.49.

vapor and convert it into the showers that water the land."[1]

Arabia has been described by George A. Barton as one of the most barren countries in the world. "There is almost no rainfall, and rivers are unknown. The only fertile spots occur at those rare intervals where, through the volcanic action of remote ages, a rift in the rocks conducts water from unknown, far-away sources to the surface of the ground and forms a spring. Irrigation from this spring produces in that subtropical climate an abundant vegetation. As one wanders across the desolate sun-burned spaces which constitute the larger part of Arabia, the contrast of the cooling waters and refreshing shade of these oases becomes unspeakably impressive."[2] It is small wonder, then, that the spirit of an oasis would become for the ancient Semite a beneficent deity. And we can realize something of what the Psalmist meant when he wrote:

"As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God."[3]

The vast importance of water is shown by the fact that one hundred and three verses in the Psalter make reference to it.[4]

Water, then, in various forms, is used by the

1.Calkin, J. B., Historical Geography of Bible Lands, p.18.

2.Barton, G. A., The Religion of Israel, pp. 4,5.

3.Psalm 42:1.

4.See Classification List on Pages 17-19.

Psalmists to symbolize or suggest the beneficence of God, His active life-giving or life-refreshing goodness toward the people.

"He will come down like rain upon the mown grass,
As showers that water the earth."[1]

Again, it is used to suggest strength:

"Thou carriest them away as with a flood."[2]

And,

"They came round about me like water all the day long."[3]

Psalm 29 describes a thunderstorm, one of the most awe-inspiring sights of Nature. The Psalmist could sense Jehovah's presence through the storm:

"The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters:
The God of glory thundereth,
Even Jehovah upon many waters."[4]

b.Rain

In the Holy Land the year is divided into a rainy and a dry season. And the rainy season, in turn, is divided into two seasons: the "Early" or "Former" rains, and the "Latter" rains. The "early" rains open the agricultural year, coming as they do from about the last of October until about the last of February. Through the first part of the winter the heavy rain falls

1.Psalm 72:6.

2.Psalm 90:5a.

3.Psalm 88:17a.

4.Psalm 29:3.

at intervals for a day or several days at a time. This increases during December, January, and February. The "latter" rains are the heavy showers of March and April. These are of particular importance because they appear just before the harvest and the long summer drought. Often hail falls, also, and sometimes is mingled with rain. The dry season extends from May until October. During this time there is practically no rain, and the heat is almost unbearable.[1] Twenty-four times in the book of Psalms reference is made to rain.[2] The following are a few of the more typical expressions:-

"Passing through the valley of Weeping they make
it a place of springs;
Yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings."[3]

"Thou waterest its furrows abundantly;
Thou settlest the ridges thereof:
Thou makest it soft with showers;
Thou blessest the springing thereof."[4]

"Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain,
Thou didst confirm thy inheritance, when it was
weary."[5]

1.Smith, G. A., Historical Geography of the Holy Land, p. 65.

2.See Classification List on Pages 10, 11.

3.Psalm 84:6.

4.Psalm 65:10

5.Psalm 68:9

c.Winds. Closely associated with the rain are the winds. The prevailing winds blow from the west, laden with moisture from the Mediterranean Sea. "In the winter months, the land, especially the highlands, radiating rapidly, is colder than the sea, and thus becomes a condensing force by which the vapor of the atmosphere are converted into rain. But in the summer months the land, absorbing more heat than it radiates, becomes more highly heated than the sea, and is no longer a condensing influence. At this season a saturated west wind, on striking the highly-heated land, is no longer saturated, but acquires increased capacity for water vapor. Hence, it gives no rain."[1] An east wind blows from the hot, dry desert, with a scorching, blighting influence on vegetable and animal life. It sometimes even breaks violently on the coast.

"With the east wind
Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish."[2]

But even the dry east wind is a great source of relief from the intense heat of the summer.[3] Winds are used to suggest a destructive force from which one needs protection:

1.Calkin, J. B., Historical Geography of Bible Lands, p.17.
2.Psalm 48:7.
3.For References to Winds see Classification List, p.8.

"I would haste me to a shelter
From the stormy wind and tempest."[1]

The power of God is suggested in His control of the winds:

"He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens;
And by His power He guided the south wind."[2]

And:

"For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,
Which lifteth up the waves thereof."[3]

d. Sheep and Shepherds.

Of all the figures of speech which are used in the Bible, that of the sheep and the shepherd is the most frequent. In the early days of their history the Israelites were strictly a pastoral people, and even to-day the raising of sheep is one of the main occupations of Palestine. This is especially true "on the eastern plateaus, where the Bedouins drive their flocks over the fenceless fields wherever they can find pasture."[4] In the days of the patriarchs people's possessions were valued by the number of sheep they had. "The sheep seems to have been reserved for sacrifice, for special festivities, and for welcoming a friend or stranger as a guest."[5]

1. Psalm 55:8.
2. Psalm 78:26.
3. Psalm 107:25.
4. Wild, L. H., Geographic Influences in Old Testament Masterpieces, p. 162.
5. Ibid., p. 164.

In the opinion of the Syrians the sheep of the Orient are superior to those in America. They are characterized by intelligent faces, meekness, gentleness, and obedience. They are generally kept in separate flocks, each under the care of a shepherd, on the plains, hills, and small mountains. The shepherd must take the responsibility of his flock, finding it good and fertile pasture, and still waters from which to drink. And the shepherd must lead the sheep, which are under his care, from the dangerous rocky cliffs, and protect them from the wild animals.[1] While most of the Syrian sheep are white, in northern Syria there are some black ones.[2]

The figure of the Lord as a Shepherd, and Israel as His flock is a natural one for such a pastoral country. The figure of the sheep suggests the need of care, and of guidance, which the shepherd provides. The shepherd symbolizes kindness, tenderness, and great love, also heroic bravery and courage.

As "He chose David also His servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds:
From following the ewes that have their young
He brought him,
To be the shepherd of Jacob his people, and Israel
his inheritance.
So he was their shepherd according to the integrity
of his heart,

1. Rice, E. W., Orientalism in Bible Lands, p. 161.
2. Ibid., p. 167.

And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands."[1]

So "The Lord is my shepherd."[2]

"We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."[3]

e.Trees and Forests.

The conditions for the growth of such large forests as we have in Europe and America are not present in Palestine. That which is our conception of a "woodland" is what is meant by the "forests" of Palestine. The woods were "open and scattered, the trees distinguished rather for thickness than height." Occasionally groves of larger trees might be seen on the bare landscape. Several varieties of oak, pines, and cypresses, and water plane trees are the chief trees of the forests. These trees were "trees of God", that is, distinguished from those planted by man. The walnut and sycomores were cultivated.[4]

Many kinds of fruit trees flourish in Syria. Fig trees are cultivated in gardens, usually by women. There are several kinds of figs, varying in their time of ripening. "The fig and olive orchards are plowed in the spring, when the leaves are starting, and sometimes again when the first crop has been stripped off, and the second crop is sprouting, and again in the autumn after

1.Psalm 78:70, 71, 72.

2.Psalm 23:1.

3.Psalm 100:3.

4.Smith, G. A., Historical Geography of the Holy Land, p.81.

the first rains."[1] There is but one reference in the Psalter to the fig tree. Reviewing the history of the nation, the Psalmist writes:

"He smote their vines also, and their fig trees."[2]

Olive trees are especially abundant in the Holy Land. One outstanding characteristic of these trees is the large amount of blossoms which they bear. The olive tree was a sign of peace, reconciliation, and plenty, for the dove brought back an olive leaf to the ark.[3] This tree is used in a simile in Psalm 52:8:-

"But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God."[4]

And again:-

"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine,
In the innermost parts of thy house;
Thy children like olive plants,
Round about thy table."[5]

Kirkpatrick says that at the present time, in the Haram area, trees grow in the Temple courts. Possibly this was the case, also, in the time of the Psalmist who compares his prosperity and security to these carefully tended trees

1.Rice, E. W., Orientalism in Bible Lands, p. 146.

2.Psalm 105:33.

3.Rice, E. W., Orientalism in Bible Lands, p. 149.

4.Psalm 52:8.

5.Psalm 128:3.

planted in sacred ground.[1]

The palm trees have largely disappeared from Oriental lands, thorns and wild brush now taking their places. But they must have abounded in Bible times, for Jericho was called "The City of Palm Trees".[2] There is one reference to it in the Psalter:

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree,
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon."[3]

Maclaren points out that "the point of comparison is apparently the gracefulness of the tree, which lifts its slender but upright stem, and is ever verdant and fruitful. The cedar, in its massive strength, its undecaying vigour, and the broad shelves of its foliage, green among the snows of Lebanon stands in strong contrast to the palm. Gracefulness is wedded to strength, and both are perennial in lives devoted to God and Right."[4]

The sycomore tree is closely related to the fig tree. It grows very large, often fifty feet in circumference. It is evergreen with leaves having a spicy fragrance.[5]

1.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 299.

2.Rice, E. W., Orientalism in Bible Lands, p.157.

3.Psalm 92:12.

4.The Expositor's Bible, Vol. III., p. 31.

5.Rice, E. W., Orientalism in Bible Lands, p. 158.

It is quite probable that much of what is now "fields" was at one time "forests". The great forests seem to have been those of Gilead, Bashan, and Lebanon.[1]

2.Objects of Danger.

a.Wild Beasts.

There were some objects of Nature which the people of Israel had to struggle to overcome. Chief among these were wild beasts, which had to be controlled and compelled by force to learn to submit to man's will. The Psalmist wrote:-

"Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding;
Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in,
Else they will not come near unto thee."[2]

The major use of the figure of wild beasts in the Psalter is to symbolize the anger and rage of enemies:-

"Lest they tear my soul like a lion,
Rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver."[3]

Yet, in contrast, we have in Psalm 34:-

"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger;
But they that seek Jehovah shall not want any good thing."[4]

1.Smith, G. A., Historical Geography of the Holy Land, p.80.

2.Psalm 32:9.

3.Psalm 7:2.

4.Psalm 34:10.

Beasts also suggest ignorance and brutishness:-

"So brutish was I, and ignorant;
I was as a beast before thee."[1]

b.Serpent. The figure of the serpent is typical of insidious deadliness. The deaf adder, or asp, the most venomous of all serpents, resists all the arts of the snake charmer. The "deaf" serpent is distinguished by the Arabs from the serpent which answers the call of the snake charmer by hissing. Snake charming is still practiced in the East.[2] The Psalmist made use of the serpent to symbolize the subtly unrighteous:-

"Their poison is like the poison of a serpent:
They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear."[3]

c.The Wilderness. Much of the Holy Land is now wilderness, "revolting in its stony dryness."[4] A traveller describes it thus:-

"The highway through the wildeness is very dreary, and the reflection of the sun's rays from the white limestone formation is almost unbearable. There is no shelter from the heat of the day, no tree, and only here and there a tuft of grass upon which the

1.Psalm 7:2.

2.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 328.

3.Psalm 58:4.

4.Smith, G. A., Historical Geography of the Holy Land, p.93.

goats and sheep exist."[1] Many verses in the Psalms refer to the wandering of the people of Israel through the wilderness, showing that God was leading at every step:-

"To Him that led His people through the wilderness;"[2]

And:-

"He clave rocks in the wilderness,
And gave them drink abundantly as out of the depths."[3]

3.The Enduring Phases of Nature.

a.Hills and Mountains.

Hills and mountains are the most immovable and unchangeable part of the whole earth. Jerusalem is surrounded by mountains or high hills: the Mount of Olives on the east, the Hill of Evil Counsel on the South, a ridge connected with the Mount of Olives on the north, and a smaller hill on the west. These mountains were to the people of Jerusalem a symbol of God's guardianship of His people. Upon the very top of the range of mountains about Jerusalem looms Mount Zion, nearly three thousand feet above sea level.[4] Many Psalms refer to this mountain, as for example Psalm 125:1:-

1.Elmendorf, D. L., A Camera Crusade through the Holy Land, p. 93.

2.Psalm 136:16.

3.Psalm 78:15.

4.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 746.

"They that trust in Jehovah
Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but
abideth forever."[1]

And:-

"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
So Jehovah is round about His people
For this time forth and for evermore."[2]

The Lebanon mountains comprise two parallel ranges, Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. These extend northeast and southwest for about one hunderd miles. The Lebanons are "the White Mountains of Syria". The name, itself, which means "white", may have originated either in their snow-clad summits or in the white limestone on their slopes. The Westerly range, Lebanon, has an average height of about seven thousand feet, and an extreme elevation of about 10,500 feet. It provides beautiful scenery with its lofty peaks, deep gorges, and rapid streams. The western slope, which faces the Mediterranean Sea, is well watered by the vapor-laden westerly winds. These slopes are very fertile, yielding wheat, olives, oates, figs, and grapes to a height of about five thousand feet. Only a few groups of the great cedars for which Lebanon was once famous now remain. Because of its great variety of climate, an Arabian poet has said of Lebanon: "The

1.Psalm 125:1.

2.Psalm 125:2.

winter is upon its head, the spring upon its shoulders, the autumn in its bosom, and at its feet slumbers the summer."[1]

The highest peak of the Anti-Lebanon range is Mount Hermon. Here the rainfall is less abundant because the rain winds from the Mediterranean have been deprived of the richness of their moisture.[2] Mount Hermon is 9,200 feet above sea level. During a large part of the year snow covers its summits, and condenses the vapors with which the air is laden. For this reason clouds are usually seen hovering over them.[3]

The Mount of Olives lies on the east of Jerusalem. The narrow ravine of the Kidron separates it from the city. The Mount is 2,637 feet above sea level.[4]

b.Rocks. Much of the imagery of the Psalter is derived from the features of a country abounding in cliffs and caves and natural strongholds. These are often referred to as symbols of Jehovah, who is always a true Refuge and Deliverer:-

"Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; My God, my rock, in whom I will take refuge."[5]

1.Calkin, J. B., Historical Geography of Bible Lands, p.15.

2.Ibid., p. 15.

3.Ibid., p. 16.

4.Ibid., p. 38.

5.Psalm 18:2.

According to Maclaren, the first "rock" mentioned is more properly a "crag" or "cliff", suggesting inaccessibility, and the second is a "rock mass", giving the idea of firmness or solidity.[1] But the general idea is that of safety. The great Rock remains unchangeable above fleeting things, giving protection to all who seek shelter there.

4.The Fleeting and Ephemeral.

a.Grass, Herbs, etc.

The grass and the green herb are a common image for what is transient and perishable.[2] Grass in the Jordan valley and around the Dead Sea is somewhat different from the grass with which we are familiar. It quickly shoots up in the early spring, and then as rapidly withers under the scorching sun, and leaves no trace of its existence save its straggling stems.[3] The Psalmists use this frequently in similes, comparing the enemy or the wicked to the grass which withers so quickly:-

> "When the wicked spring as the grass,
> And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish;
> It is that they shall be destroyed for ever."[4]

1.Maclaren, The Psalms, Vol.I., p. 168.

2.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 189.

3.Ibid., p. 550.

4.Psalm 92:7.

And:-

"As for man, his days are as grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth."[1]

In Psalm 129:6 we have a reference to grass upon the housetops. It often happened that grass sprang up quickly on the flat roofs of oriental houses, but having no depth of soil, it withered prematurely away.[2]

"Let them be as the grass upon the housetops,
Which withereth before it groweth up."[3]

The reference to "hyssop" in Psalm 51:7 is to a common herb which grew upon walls. It was used in the rites for cleansing the leper and purifying the unclean. But when the Psalmist said:-

"Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean,"

he was thinking of the spiritual cleansing of which those outward rites were the symbol.[4]

"They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns."[5]

Here the Psalmist compares the collapse of the rage of the enemy to the fire of dry thorn twigs which "sinks into ashes the sooner the more it crackles and blazes."[6]

1.Psalm 103:15.

2.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 757.

3.Psalm 129:6.

4.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 291.

5.Psalm 118:12.

6.Maclaren, The Psalms, Vol. III., p. 236.

The vine was a staple product in Bible ages, and from it are drawn several similes. The Psalmist, speaking of the domestic happiness of him who fears Jehovah and obeys His laws, compares a wife to the fruitfulness, gracefulness, and preciousness of the vine. Perhaps its need of support may be referred to, also.[1]

"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine,
In the innermost parts of thy house."[2]

b. Snow and Frost.

"Snow must always have been rare in Central and Southern Palestine", and "frost is very rare at Jerusalem."[3] Therefore, they would be more striking phenomena than they are to us. It has been suggested that Psalm 147:16 was written during or after a severe winter:-[4]

"He giveth snow like wool;
He scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes."

Psalm 148:8:-

"Fire and hail, snow and vapor;
Stormy wind, fulfilling his word;"

seems to describe a winter snow storm. The verbal arrangement of this verse, according to Maclaren, is that of

1. Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 755.
2. Psalm 128:3.
3. Tristram, Natural History of the Bible, p. 28.
4. Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 824.

inverted parallelism, in which "fire" corresponds to "smoke" (vapor), and "hail" to "snow". Fire (lightning) and hail are naturally coupled, describing a summer thunderstorm.[1]

And again, in Psalm 68:14, snowflakes falling against the background of the dark mountain of Zalmon are symbols for the kings driven in flight by the breath of the Lord:[2]

"When the Almighty scattered kings therein,
It was as when it snoweth in Zalmon."[3]

c. Chaff and Stubble.

The chaff, or stubble, is used in the Psalter as a figure to describe the fate of the wicked. The threshing-floors were placed on high ground on which the corn was threshed out and winnowed by throwing it up against the wind with shovels, the grain falling on the floor to be gathered up, and the chaff carried away by the wind:[4]

"The wicked are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."[5]

1. The Expositor's Bible, Vol.III., p. 451.
2. Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 385.
3. Psalm 68:14.
4. Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 105.
5. Psalm 1:4.

5.Aesthetic Appeal.

a.Birds.

"Timorous and defenceless birds supply a graphic figure for the victims of persecution who have no resource but flight."[1] Many varieties of birds may be found in Palestine. In the Psalter we find references to the eagle, owl, pelican, quail, raven, stork, swallow, sparrow, and dove. The dove is an emblem of timidity and innocence. The Psalmist, weary of his life in the cruel city, and wishing to fly away to some protecting cliff, writes:-

"And I said, Oh, that I had wings like a dove,
Then would I fly away, and be at rest."[2]

Again, the Psalmist compares himself to "solitude-loving birds which haunt desolate places and ruins, uttering weird and mournful cries." The Arabs call the owl "Mother of ruins".[3]

"I am like a pelican of the wilderness;
I am become as an owl of the waste places.
I watch, and am become like a sparrow
That is alone upon the housetop."[4]

The sparrow may refer to any small song-bird. When one

1.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 58.

2.Psalm 55:6.

3.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p.594.

4.Psalm 102:6, 7.

has lost his mate -- which often happens -- "he will sit on the housetop alone, and lament by the hour."[1]

The eagle is considered a bird which seems to enjoy perpetual youth. In Psalm 103:5 this is made the point of comparison with the new, youthful vigor of the Israelites after the exile:[2]

"Who satisfieth thy desire with good things,
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle."[3]

6. Impressive-Cosmic.
a. Heavenly Bodies.

The heavenly bodies are frequently used in figures of speech. In Psalm 89:37 the fixed laws of Nature are appealed to, as a symbol of the permanence of God's covenant with Israel and with David:[4]

"It shall be established for ever as the moon,
And as faithful witness in the sky."

Again, in Psalm 148:3, 4, the sun, moon, and stars, and the heavens in general are summoned to praise Jehovah. The waters above the heavens refer to the great reservoir of waters which the Hebrews supposed to exist above the firmament. This body of water was supposed to be the

1. Thomson, Land and Book, p. 43.
2. Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 601.
3. Psalm 103:5.
4. Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 540.

source of rain.[1]

Psalm 103:11 expresses the towering height of God's mercy by the use of a simile:-

"For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is his lovingkindness toward them that
fear him."[2]

Psalm 104 more than any other single Psalm suggests delight in the contemplation of Nature in its various forms and adaptations. Maclaren describes the Psalm thus: It "is a gallery of vivid Nature-pictures, touched with wonderful grace and sureness of hand. Clearness of vision, and sympathy with every living thing make the swift outlines inimitably firm and lovely. The poet's mind is like a crystal mirror, in which the Cosmos is reflected."[3] The variety of the forms of God's creation, His Wisdom in shaping them all, and His ownership of them all are the dominant impressions made by the devout contemplation of Nature.[4]

"O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works,
In wisdom hast thou made them all;
The earth is full of thy riches."[5]

1.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 826.

2.Psalm 103:11.

3.Maclaren, The Psalms, Vol.III., p. 113.

4.Ibid., p. 119.

5.Psalm 104:24.

There can be no doubt that this Psalm was influenced by the account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis. Yet it is no mere paraphrase. Its vivid descriptiveness is personal. The first four verses picture the creation of the heavens. Nature is the garment of God; the heavens a curtain; the waters above the firmament the beams of His upper chambers; the clouds the symbols of His advent; and fire and winds His messengers. Beginning with verse five, we have the story of the creation of the earth. The Psalmist then describes how it was clothed and peopled. Here, again, is emphasized the need for water, upon which everything depends. The making of the seasons is described in verse 19. It is interesting to note that the moon is mentioned first, because the Hebrew day began with the evening. Beginning with verse 25, the poetic story of the creation is continued with a description of the sea - "great and spread on either hand," where "the ships go on." The latter part of the Psalm shows the dependence on God of all creatures of earth and sea, including man, for life, and closes, as it began, with a call to the Psalmist's own soul to bless Jehovah.[1]

"These wait all for thee,
That thou mayest give them their food in due season.
Thou givest unto them, they gather;

1.Maclaren, The Psalms, pp. 113-123.

Thou openest thy hand, they are satisfied with good.
Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled;
Thou takest away their breath, they die,
And return to their dust.
Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created;
And thou renewest the face of the ground."[1]

b.The Sirocco.

The Sirocco is the name given to the winds blowing from the desert. They are hot winds, and "come with a mist of fire sand, veiling the sun, scorching vegetation, and bringing languor and fever to men. They are most painful airs, and if the divine economy were only for our physical benefit, inexplicable, for they neither carry rain nor help at harvest."[2]

In Psalm 8 we find the thought of "the superiority of the revelation in man's nature and place to that in the vault of heaven. In man's insignificance is lodged a Divine spark, and, lowly as is his head as he stands beneath the midnight sky blazing with inaccessible lights, it is crowned with a halo which reflects God's glory more brightly than does their lustre."[3]

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

1.Psalm 104:27-30.

2.Smith, G. A., Historical Geography of the Holy Land, p.67.

3.Maclaren, The Psalms, p. 69.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honor."1

1.Psalm 8:3-5.

Chapter IV.

Religious and Philosophic Conceptions Found in the Psalms.

The Psalmists. Thus far we have noticed, in the main, the figurative and suggestive ways in which various objects and features of the out-of-doors are employed by the writers of the Psalms. If we were judging the writers themselves, from such expressions as we have canvassed, we should have to attribute to them characteristics that belong to all poets, namely, keenness of observation, personal sensitivity, fertility of imagination, capacity to see likenesses and analogies, and aesthetic delight; all this coupled with that power of creativity which results in formal and ideal expression. But these Psalmists were more than poets in the ordinary sense of the term,- they were religious thinkers, and, within their limitations, perhaps incipient philosophers.

Liturgic Purposes. The Psalms, moreover, according to J. P. Peters, were written for liturgic purposes. He gives us the following list of ritual occasions for which specific Psalms were either composed or used:[1]

1. Whole burnt offering, Psalms 3, 22.
2. Meal offering, Psalms 38, 70.
3. Peace and free will offering, Psalms 53, 56, 66, 100, 107, 116, 118,

1. Peters, J. P., The Psalms as Liturgies,

120, 136.

4.Sin offering

a.for priest, Psalms 61, 63.

b.for congregation, Psalms 25, 38.

c.for ruler

d.for individual, Psalms 6, 39, 41.

5.Guilt and trespass offering, Psalm 40.

6.Consecration of priests

7.Purification after child birth, Psalm 51.

8.Purification after leprosy

9.Purification after unclean issue

10.Red heifer

11.Atonement, Psalms 16, 22, 102, 130.

12.Vows,Psalm 50.

13.Consecration of Levites

14.New moon, Psalms 98, 104.

15.First fruits, Psalms 26, 65, 67.

16.Daily morning and evening, Psalms 3, 4, 22, 63.

17.Sabbath, Psalm 92.

18.Passover, Psalm 81.

19.New Year, Psalms 47, 81.

20.Tabernacles, Psalms 42, 43, 76, 81, 118.

21.Priestly blessing

22.On days of gladness, set feasts, and new moons, trumpets blown at sacrifices

23.Ark Song, Psalms 24, 68.

24.The fast of the fifth month and the fast of the seventh, Psalms 29, 34, 81.

25.The Feast of Purim, Psalm 7.

26.The Feast of Dedication, Psalm 30.

27.The Feast of the Battle of Beth Haran

Now poems or hymns written for religious usage involve religious and philosophic conceptions, and we cannot ignore these in our present study, for the Psalms which are either entirely or predominantly Nature Psalms are descriptively expressive of certain conceptions of God that belonged to the religious inheritance of the righteous.

God, as Creator, as enunciated in the first three chapters of Genesis, is undoubtly the belief of some of these writers. Psalm 8 assumes the creatorship of God. The writer is decidedly poetic, and from the impressiveness of the midnight sky over against which a human being is so small, he rises to an impressive grasp of the excellency of God, who visits seemingly insignificant man and endows him with such controlling power.

Psalm 19, again, begins with an impressive admiration of the rise, orderly movement, and dominion of the sun. This lawful glory of the heavens, coupled with the moral law given to man, gives a suggestion of the cosmic, orderly, or moral character of God Himself. Not only is God a mighty Creator of things, -- He is rational and

moral in the orderliness and care with which He has made all things for appropriate uses.

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth His handiwork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language;
Their voice is not heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course.
His going forth is from the end of the heavens,
And his circuit unto the ends of it;
And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."[1]

In Psalm 29 we have the majesty of a storm showing the glory of God, in the sense of a mighty s eep of power. To the Psalmist all Nature spoke of God's power and glory and beneficence. To him the "thunder was the Voice of God, and all the terrible phenomena of the storm were an expression of the majesty of the Eternal Sovereign of the Universe."[2]

1.Psalm 19:1-6.

2.Kirkpatrick, Psalms, p. 147.

"The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters;
The God of glory thundereth,
Even Jehovah upon many waters.
The voice of Jehovah is powerful;
The voice of Jehovah is full of majesty.
The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars;
Yea, Jehovah breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
He maketh them also to skip like a calf;
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild-ox.
The voice of Jehovah cleaveth the flames of fire.
The voice of Jehovah shaketh the wilderness;
Jehovah shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
The voice of Jehovah maketh the hinds to calve,
And strippeth the forests bare:
And in His temple everything saith, Glory."[1]

The last two verses of the Psalm spiritualize the situation:

"Jehovah sat as King at the flood;
Yea, Jehovah sitteth as King for ever.
Jehovah will give strength unto His people;
Jehovah will bless His people with peace."[2]

Again, we have expressions of the provident goodness of God over against the insignificance of man. Psalm 23 is an utterance of trust in Jehovah. Two images - that

1.Psalm 29:3-9.

2.Psalm 29:10, 11.

of the shepherd and that of the host - illustrate the thought.[1] The tone is strongly personal. "It is an individual realization and appropriation of the blessings involved in the covenant-relation of Jehovah to His people," and "admits of the most universal application to all needs, temporal and spiritual, in all ages."[2] There are a series of pictures describing the care of the shepherd -- guidance to rest and refreshment at still waters when the noontide heat becomes almost unbearable; leading in safe places; and the giving of strength and comfort when in dangerous places. As the shepherd, probably David, cared so lovingly for his sheep, so

"The Lord is <u>my</u> shepherd; I shall not want."[3]

The major conclusion to be drawn here is that the Psalmists did not draw their conceptions of God from a contemplation of Nature, but they looked at Nature through God. That is, they possessed certain teachings concerning God, His creatorship, His lawfulness, His provident care, His love, His beneficence; and they found in Nature illustrations and confirmations of these items of their faith.

1.Maclaren, <u>The Psalms</u>, Vol.I., p. 227.

2.Kirkpatrick, <u>Psalms</u>, p. 124.

3.Psalm 23:1.

Conclusion.

The Psalter has been called "the heart of the Bible," for it is in the Bible what the heart is in man.[1] In the Psalter we find a full expression of the Hebrew's love of Nature. "To the Psalmists Nature throbbed with life and feeling. There was a spirit in Nature that linked her close with humanity."[2] Blake expresses something of this same sympathy with Nature in his "Laughing Song":[3]

"When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it,"

And again, in his "A Vision of the Last Judgment", Blake seems to have essentially the same feelings as the Psalmist concerning the Universe:[4]

"I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it is hindrance, and not action. 'What!' it will be questioned, 'when the sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat like a guinea?' Oh! no, no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, 'Holy, holy,

1.Gordon, A. R., The Poets of the Old Testament, p.98.
2.Ibid., p.147.
3.Ibid., p.147.
4.Ibid., p.151.

holy is the Lord God Almighty!' I question not my corporeal eye, any more than I would question a window concerning a sight. I look through it, and not with it."

Nature is like a mirror, reflecting the Psalmists' own moods. "The ringing shouts of the pastures, hills, and floods are heard only when the poet himself is filled with the gladness of the Lord. When the dark clouds sweep over his head, and sorrows surge within him, Nature wears a different garb."[1] In the worship of Jehovah Nature and humanity most fully express this harmony. Jehovah is the Father of both Nature and man, and Nature and man join in praising Him.

"Praise ye Jehovah.
Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens:
Praise him in the heights.
Praise ye him, all his angels:
Praise ye him, all his host.
Praise ye him, sun and moon:
Praise him, all ye stars of light.
Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
And ye waters that are above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of Jehovah;
For he commanded, and they were created.
He hath also established them for ever and ever:

1.Gordon, A. R., The Poets of the Old Testament, p. 148.

He hath made a decree which shall not pass away.
Praise Jehovah from the earth,
Ye sea-monsters, and all deeps;
Fire and hail, snow and vapor;
Stormy wind, fulfilling his word;
Mountains and all hills;
Fruitful trees and all cedars;
Beasts and all cattle;
Creeping things and flying birds;
Kings of the earth and all peoples;
Princes and all judges of the earth;
Both young men and virgins;
Old men and children:
Let them praise the name of Jehovah;
For his name alone is exalted;
His glory is above the earth and the heavens.
And he hath lifted up the horn of his people,
The praise of all his saints;
Even of the children of Israel, a people near
unto him.
Praise ye Jehovah."[1]

1.Psalm 148.

Summary.

A study of the one hundred and fifty Psalms which comprise the Psalter, as we now have it, shows an interesting process of growth. From an original threefold division, the Psalter was combined into one book, which was later divided into five books, as it is in its present form.

Individual Psalms are ascribed to the Hebrew poets: Moses, David, Solomon, Asaph, Sons of Korah, Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman the Ezrahite, although it is doubtful that the ascription is true in each case. The exact dates of the Psalms cannot be determined, but it is probable that they were written during the centuries beginning with David and ending with the Maccabean era.

The one hundred and four Psalms which have allusions to Nature are the particular subject of this study. Objects of Nature are frequently used in figures of speech. There are, in the Psalter, eleven instances of apostrophe, thirty-one of metaphor, seventy-four of simile, and two hundred and fifty-five general allusions to Nature.

In the land of Palestine there was a great variety of plant and animal life. It was a land abounding in crags and cliffs; in it were mountains, rivers,

and valleys, forests, and deserts. Thus, the features of the land afforded much material for the Hebrew poets.

The outstanding factors which condition their selection are (1) objects of practical value, such as water, rain, winds, sheep and shepherds, trees, and forests; (2) objects of danger, including wild beasts, serpents, and the wilderness; (3) objects of strength and endurance, as the hills, mountains, and rocks; (4) the fleeting and ephemeral, including grass, herbs, etc., snow, and chaff; (5) aesthetic appeal, as birds, clouds, and flourishing trees; and (6) the impressive or cosmic, as the heavenly bodies, the storm, and the Sirocco or desert winds.

The Psalmists were religious thinkers and, within their limitations, incipient philosophers as well as poets, for we find certain religious and philosophic conceptions in the Psalter. The Psalmists looked at Nature through God, and there found illustrations and confirmations of their beliefs -- God's creatorship, His lawfulness, His provident care, His love, and His beneficence.

"Thus the crowning glory of Nature is to radiate the light of the Eternal. To the Hebrews the face of Nature interposed no veil between the countenance of God and the hearts of those who sought Him. It was rather a shining mirror in which they could trace the very features of the Divine."[1]

1.Gordon, A. R., The Poets of the Old Testament, p. 150.

Bibliography

Barton, George A., The Religion of Israel. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918.

Bewer, Julius A., The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development. New York: Columbia University Press, 1926.

Calkin, John B., Historical Geography of Bible Lands. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1915.

Crosby, Rena L., The Geography of Bible Lands. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1921.

Driver, S. R., An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament. New York: Charles S Scribner's Sons, 1914.

Eiselen, Frederick Carl, The Psalms and Other Sacred Writings. New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1918.

Elmendorf, Dwight L., A Camera Crusade through the Holy Land. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912.

Forbush, William B., The Travel Lessons on the Old Testament. New York: Underwood and Underwood, 1909.

Gordon, A. R., The Poets of the Old Testament. New York: and London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912.

Green, William H., General Introduction to the Old Testament. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.

Kent, Charles F., Biblical Geography and History. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924.

Kent, Charles F., The Songs, Hymns, and Prayers of the Old Testament. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914.

Kirkpatrick, A. F., Psalms. Cambridge: The University Press, 1921.

Knight, William A., The Song of our Syrian Guest. Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1911.

Maclaren, Alexander, The Psalms. Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, New York: Eaton and Mains, 1892.

Mac Coun, Townsend, The Holy Land in Geography. Vol.I, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897.

Moore, W. W., and Mack, Edward, Teaching Values of the Old Testament. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1918.

Prothero, R. E., The Psalms in Human Life. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1903.

Rice, E. W., Orientalism in Bible Lands. Philadelphia: The American Sunday School Union, 1912.

Simpson, The Psalmists. London: Oxford University Press, 1926.

Smith, George Adam, The Early Poetry of Israel in its Physical and Social Origins. London: Oxford University Press, 1912.

Smith, George Adam, The Historical Geography of the Holy Land. New York and London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896.

Spencer, F. Ernest, A Short Introduction to the Old Testament. London, New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1912.

Stalker, James, The Beauty of the Bible. London: James Clarke and Company, 1918.

Van Dyke, Henry, Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908.

Van Dyke, Henry, The Story of the Psalms. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.

Wild, Laura H., Geographic Influences in Old Testament Masterpieces. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1915.